



CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Economic Development Commission

MEETING MINUTES

October 11, 2011 | 7:30 p.m.

Commissioners: Daphne Collins (Chair), Chris Steele (Vice Chair), Jack Leader (Secretary), Barry Abramson, Chuck Eisenberg, Jane Ives, Peter Lew, Ronald Lipof, Joyce Moss, Philip Plottel, Darryl Settles

Staff: Candace Havens, Amanda Stout

Guests: Ald. Charlie Shapiro, Bill Renke, Anatol Zukerman

Absent: David Abromowitz, Robert Gifford, John Pears

Setti D. Warren
Mayor

Candace Havens
Director
Planning & Development

Amanda Stout
Senior Economic
Development Planner

Commissioners

Daphne Collins, Chair
Christopher Steele,
Vice Chair
Jack Leader, Secretary

Barry Abramson
David Abromowitz
Charles Eisenberg
Robert Gifford
Jane Ives
Peter Kai Jung Lew
Ronald Lipof
Joyce Moss
John R.A. Pears
Philip Plottel
Darryl Settles

1. EDC Business

- Vote on September 8th Minutes. Motion to approve (7-0, Leader seconded by Ives)

2. Elm and Border

- The EDC submitted a letter to Ald. Ted Hess-Mahan and the Land Use Committee in support of Special Permit #148-11(2) 111 and 115-119 Elm Street and 8 Border Street.
- Commissioners briefly discussed the EDC "Questions" that are asked of applicants and how the answers to these questions feed into a letter of support for a petitioner.

3. Village Overlay

- Plottel drafted and distributed a letter regarding Docket Item #153-11, Retail Overlay district to encourage vibrant pedestrian streetscapes. After brief discussion, Commissioners agreed that Stout should finalize the letter and submit it to Ald. Marcia Johnson, Chair of the Zoning and Planning Committee.

4. Subcommittee on Existing Business Support

- Collins reported on a meeting of subcommittee members with Bob Halpin, President of the Newton-Needham Chamber of Commerce. Halpin expressed interest in working with the EDC, suggesting shared sponsorship of "thought forums" with local business leaders.
- Collins reported on a meeting of subcommittee members with Ald. Scott Lennon, President of the Board, and Ald. Cheryl Lappin, Vice President of the Board, to discuss how the EDC might effectively work with the Board. Collins said Ald. Lennon and Ald. Lappin were impressed with the EDC Annual Report (presented in February 2011) and would like to hold a "kick-off" event in February 2012.
- Steele emphasized the need to educate the Board on what the EDC can do and the role it plays in the City. Lipof and Settles suggested that the EDC should do more in its role of "promoting" business in the city. Eisenberg noted that in the past, the EDC made conscious decisions about which projects and initiatives to pursue (e.g. Newton Centre). Ald. Shapiro said that he sees the EDC as a very relevant, thoughtful pro-business voice in the City.

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5. Subcommittee on Business Attraction

- Steele reported that the subcommittee is scheduling meetings with real estate professionals to discuss opportunities and barriers to entry. They are also interested in speaking with businesses that chose not to locate in Newton.
- Abramson said that he is looking at the special permit process. Havens noted that the City has a revised brochure that describes this process, which the Planning Department has been working to streamline by holding public hearings and working sessions on the same day for quick turnaround on smaller projects.
- Steele said that he and others have been participating in the Zoning Reform Group, which is having a meeting on October 13th and a final public meeting on November 3rd.

6. Riverside

- Collins reported that she, Pears, and Moss attended the Community Meeting held by the project developer, B.H. Normandy, on October 6th. She distributed copies of the handout distributed at the meeting and said the majority of the questions focused on the impacts of traffic and school children. Neither tax revenue projections nor fiscal analysis data are yet available. Havens said that the project's zoning will first need to go through the Zoning and Planning Committee, followed by the special permit application to the Land Use Committee. The site will remain a public use zone until it is re-zoned.
- Eisenberg suggested that the project is an example of poor land use planning and that it is too small to generate enough revenue to enable community benefits. Plottel and other commissioners noted that they were torn because they want to support development of the site but are not happy with the current plan for various reasons. Some noted that the EDC has an "open invitation" out to Normandy to come discuss the project at an EDC meeting. The group discussed the impact of the MBTA, which initiated the RFP for the project and has placed physical constraints on the site development. Renke and Zukerman also commented on the project.
- **Motion:** The EDC will write a letter to Mayor Setti Warren, the Board of Aldermen, and Normandy to argue for a "better and bigger project," (1) reiterating the importance of the site, (2) suggesting that the development focus on transit and be mixed-use, and (3) requesting that Mayor Warren take an active role in discussions with Normandy and the MBTA/MassDOT to unlock the potential of the site, including opening access to the Charles River and revisiting the discussion of the amount of space the MBTA needs to retain on the site for storage. (Plottel, seconded by Lew, 11-0)

7. Old Business

- Moss drafted and distributed a letter to Clint Schuckel, Associate City Engineer, requesting the study of the recommendation that all one-hour parking meters in Newton Centre be changed to two-hour meters. Stout will finalize the letter and advise the EDC of next steps.
- The disposition of the Health Department property will be discussed at the October meeting of the Real Property Reuse Committee. Collins drafted a letter from the EDC regarding redevelopment of the nearby Cypress Street parking lot to be delivered at the appropriate time in the review process.
- Leader updated the Commission on the Austin Street project, which was discussed at the September meeting of the Real Property Reuse Committee. He said that key discussions were around whether a future RFP for the site would require 15% or 25% affordable housing and whether the City would ask a prospective developer for the land value (est. \$1.5 million) up-front or if the site would be sold for a nominal fee (\$1).

The meeting adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Amanda Stout, AICP, Sr. Economic Development Planner